PERSECUTED DISSENTERS ANSWERED.

Being the Substance of a Discourse with one of them.

In a Letter to a Gentleman of Grays Inn.

LONDON,

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THE Perſecuted Diſſenter ANSWERED.

SIR,

BEing very late laſt night before I return'd to my Lodgings, as I paſt by the Groom-Porters, the Chair-men ask'd me, if I would not have a Chair? I told them, I could not afford it. A Gentleman that was paſſing by took occaſion to ſay, I might have a Chair for a ſmall matter; I ask'd him how much? He ſaid, they never took leſs than a Shilling, tho it was but to the next door, and yet I might be car-

carried from thence to *White-hall* for the ſame Money: But continuing to ſay that I could not afford to pay for a Chair, he took the liberty to expreſs himſelf very much againſt the Times and the Government, ſaying, that all true Chriſtians were oppreſſed, and under a ſevere Perſecution. I ask'd him how this could be, ſince the Government did allow Liberty of Conſcience to all Religions and Perſwaſions? And tho I could not by this time but give a ſhrewd gueſs what Judgment and Perſwaſion he was of, yet that I might be ſure not to be miſtaken, nor to ſeem too ſenſible of his meaning, I ſeem'd ignorant, and inſtanced in the chief, and moſt known Diſſenters, the Quakers, Anabaptiſts, Independants, and Presbyterians; ſaying that Liberty of Conſcience was allow'd to theſe and all others, and how then could any complain of Perſecution? True, ſays he, Liberty of Conſcience is granted to theſe and all others who do own the Authority of the preſent Government, but there is none allowed to

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those who are perſwaded in their Conſciences that King *James* is the Lawful King, and that this Government is no other than an Uſurpation. Why, ſaid I, would you have the Government tolerate its own Enemies? and pray is not King *William*'s Title to this Government, as good as *Cæſar*'s was to that of the *Jews*, when our Saviour determined, upon the ſight of his Coin, that Tribute ſhould be paid to him? And I further added, if we may pay *Cæſar* Tribute, we may Obey him, and if Obey him why not Pray for him? No, ſays he, our caſe and that of the *Jews* is very different; by the Word *Cæſar* can be underſtood no more than the King, and ſo, if in our Common-Prayer Books there had been no expreſs mention of King *William*, in excluſion of King *James*, we cou'd have pray'd for the King. I anſwer'd, if by *Cæſar* our Saviour did underſtand the Perſon of that *Cæſar* who was then the Supreme Governour of the *Jews*, as appears from the Nature, and Force of his argument, taken from the ſight

of his Image, and Superſcription upon his Coin, as alſo from his willingneſs to ſuffer under *Pontius Pilate* his Deputy, and his owning his Power and Authority to come from God, then it is manifeſt that the caſe is the ſame. And that he might not have the leaſt apprehenſion of *Cæſar*'s having a better Title to the *Jewiſh*, than his preſent Majeſty to this Government, I told him that notwithſtanding that Determination ſo much in *Cæſar*'s Favour, it was elſewhere evident that our Saviour did work a Miracle to pay Tribute to that Power, and Authority, which *Cæſar* had put out of poſſeſſion; for did he not command *Peter* to caſt a Hook into the Sea, and to give that Money to the Tributarians of the Temple, which he ſhould find in the Fiſhes mouth? And in aſmuch as this Tribute was not paid to *Cæſar*, but to the Temple, we may, with good reaſon conclude, that it had not *Cæſar*'s but the Temples Image and Superſcription upon it. Being able to make no Reply to this Argument, I took occaſion thus to explain my ſelf con-

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cerning paying Tribute and Obedience to King *William*, saying, by the same rule any one shall think it a sin to do, or say any thing that is an Acknowledgment of his Authority, he ought not to Receive, pay, or trade with any of his Coin, that shall have his Image and Superscription upon it, and that whoever does do it ought to own his Authority, and in effect does acknowledge it. I urged this consideration so far, as to say, you ought not with his Money so much as to buy a piece of Bread, if you deny his Authority. Why then, says he, we must starve; yes, said I, you must, and ought to starve, rather than do any thing that is contrary to what you are perswaded in your Minds to be the Truth, or is inconsistent with that Perswasion. But then, I added, this cannot happen to any that are willing to do as Christ and his Apostles did, who by their Virtues and Graces so recommended themselves to the Charity and Good will of others, that they did not want Food and Rayment convenient for them. Nor ought you to doubt

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but God, if your Cauſe and Virtues be good and great, will Bleſs and reward you in this or the next World, in propotion to the goodneſs of your Cauſe, and the greatneſs of your Virtues, as he always does thoſe who worſhip him in ſincerity and truth, and do lay down their Lives for the faith. To theſe things he anſwered only in a General and confuſed manner, without any chain of reaſoning, ſaying the Times the Times were not now like thoſe in the Apoſtles days, and that as this Government had not, ſo nor could it maintain its Authority, by any Doctrines of Reaſon and Juſtice, and ſo it ought not to be acknowledged, and ſubmitted to. By this time, after ſeveral haltings by the way, we were come as far as the Horſe Guards, and now perceiving in the Gentleman no more of that evenneſs and calmneſs of temper, which had at firſt engag'd me to hearken to his complaints, I told him I muſt bid him Good Night, for my Lodgings lay the other way in the *Strand*. When he perceiv'd he had drawn me out of my way, he civilly

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skt my pardon, and so we parted. Coming to my Inn, and reflecting upon this Adventure, with all the calmness and sedateness that I could, I could not but chide my self, that I had not brought him to my Inn, or enquired of him his Habitation, that so I might at another opportunity, have given him further satisfaction in these things. For tho, as I said, his temper at last seem'd to be disturbed and uneasy, and such as did even make me suspicious, lest he should have some design to draw me into inconveniencies, yet I could not but remember, that about the middle of our Discourse (when I had press'd him with some, as I thought, very plain and easy Arguments for a peaceable submission to the present Government) he seemed to be convinced, and told me in a very modest, and humble manner (without as I thought all Art and Disguise) he should be glad to wait upon me, if I would give him leave, at my Lodging, or where I should appoint, for further satisfaction in a case that had hitherto so much troubled his Mind. And

truly, I think, I was not so sensible as I ought, or I had comply'd with his Desire. Nor could it be any thing but Weakness and Fear, that made me decline so affable a condescention, and acknowledgment. And possibly so unexpected a disappointment from one of my profession, (who upon all occasions ought to inform and strengthen the minds of the wavering and doubtful) did so trouble and discompose his spirits, that he could not afterwards maintain that sedateness, and temper, which before had been so inviting. Nor did these my weak and feeble jealousies fail to work the like effects in my own Breast; so that our discourse about anothers Title to the Soveraignty of a Nation, was concluded in a mutual abdication of that Soveraignty of Reason and Virtue, which ought to banish all those servile fears, and slavish suspicions, which so much dissipate all the Obligations of a generous Love, and Charity, to Friends and Enemies, that we cannot do those things which Virtue and Religion would else oblige us to. Thus, Sir, for want of other im-

employment, at this time, presuming upon the greatness and freedom of our friendship, I have thought fit for your Diversion, to lay before you this last Nights adventure. I know very well this way and method of Reasoning, with this sort of Men is not approved of by many that are right well affected to the present Government, for that they do conceive it is not built upon a good Foundation; and when I have sometimes urged them with the Authority of St. *Matthew*, concerning our Saviours working a Miracle to pay Tribute to the Temple, as you may find it in the latter part of his 17th Chapter, and which I have here alluded to, saying, that the Precepts and Practice of our Saviour, cannot but be built upon a good Foundation, they have deny'd the interpretation I put upon that place: But knowing that I have the Authority of many Learned Men, and that the Text does naturally admit of this explication, and no other, I do not doubt but I shall be able to justify this method of Reasoning with our prosecuted

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Dissenters, and as by former experience I have observed it to shake the height of their Confidence and Assurance, so I doubt not but I shall do a good piece of service for the interest of Truth, and the Peace and Tranquility of Mens Consciences, if I can, as I believe I can, make it evident, that as the Government will be so witless as to tolerate their profest Enemies, and those that dispute their Authority; so all true Christians may and ought to live quietly and peaceable under the present Government, and enter into such obligations for the performance of their Duty, as the Government shall require.

I am

SIR,

Your Humble Servant,

W. B.